

NEWS DIGEST

OF THE I.A.R.F.



**NEWS DIGEST OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

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The picture on the cover shows the inside of "l'Oratoire", the famous Paris church, where the Executive Committee members will attend divine service on Sunday, July 31, 1960.

NEW ADDRESS OF THE SECRETARIAT:

The Secretariat moved to new apartments on February 1st. Please note the new address in all the correspondence to the IARF:

40 Laan Copes van Cattenburch, The Hague.

Charles W. Wendte

IN COMMEMORATION OF THEODORE PARKER 1810-1860

Theodore Parker once said: "The religion I preach will be the religion of enlightened men for the next thousand years." The central principle of this "Absolute Religion", as he termed it, was a lofty and fervent Theism. To Parker the human faculties were fully adequate to find such spiritual truth and guidance as they might need. The knowledge thus imparted was "intuitive" in the sense that God, Duty and Immortality are perceived at first hand, and not mediated by sense-experience, individual and racial experiences or external revelations. Belief in God, as absolute wisdom, goodness, and love enthroned in the universe, he held to be independent of external demonstration. Revealed in feeling, tempered by reason and controlled by conscience, it is the central nerve of personal and social religion. From it flows all power, pity, peace. In proportion as this inward witness is rejected, and recourse had to external authority, symbolic rites, artificial substitutes or historic mediators the religious life becomes unreal and ineffective. It does not abide in the light of God's own countenance but gropes in the shadows cast by some great soul who knew God first-hand, rejoiced in His presence, received His inspiration, and did not seek Him through physical contact in the consecrated wafer, or the testimony of a written Scripture, or to adore him in the eidolon of a human Savior. Theodore Parker was the prophet of this pure Theism, this absolute religion of humanity possible to all kinds and conditions of men, and good for all times. He was one of the most devout, most God-possessed men of his generation, believing in the Divine existence as firmly as he believed in his own, and proclaiming this conviction with unsurpassed fervor, joy and eloquence of speech. His theistic faith was the main source of his spiritual strength and ethical passion, and the secret of his wonderful power over his fellow men, imparting to them fresh courage to seek divine meanings in life

and come into direct personal relations with their Creator and Father . . .

His religion was intensely human and practical, based on feeling toward God rather than speculation about Him. Yet he possessed a methodical mind, it was an intellectual necessity for him to justify his faith to his own reason and conscience, as well as to the multitude of men and women who looked to him for instruction and guidance. That he did so in the terms of the Transcendental philosophy was due to the circumstances of his environment quite as much as to natural affinities of thought. Had his work been done in a later day it is probable that the evolutionary philosophy, whose dawnings he hailed with so keen an interest, would have greatly influenced his exposition of the faith that was in him. Not Kant or Jacobi, Coleridge or Emerson, however, so decided the nature of his theology as his devout mother. He was a profound believer from the cradle. His theology was only the attempt to justify his faith to himself and others.

In the *Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*, which was his first printed book, . . . Parker performed this task in a scholarly and scientific manner which even with the lapse of years and increase of information holds its own and challenges admiration, especially as coming from a young man of thirty-two years. It was doubtless the most erudite and able book on religion produced in his generation in America. Even so he was not satisfied, but planned for a still larger and more elaborate work on the history and development of religion among mankind, to which he hoped to devote the evening of his life.

His biographer, John Weiss, has preserved the first 190 pages of this treatise, all that he lived to write, and it proves the truth of Dr. Martineau's opinion that Parker was admirably fitted by nature's gifts and acquired learning to be the historian of religion . . .

As the present writer recalls his preaching there was in it little of the usual appeal to the senses or emotions of his listeners. The rusticity of his personal appearance, his somewhat monotonous voice, which at times, however, rang out like a trumpet, his gestures sparse and awkward, above all his close confinement to his notes, lent few charms to his discourse. It was the transparent sincerity and utter fearlessness of the preacher, his lucid orderly mind, his original and vigorous style, . . . the rich treasures of his learning, the rhetorical beauty and vast range of his illustrations, drawn from every field of human and historical knowledge and happiest when they dealt with the humblest relations of life, it was the careful reitera-

tion of the main points of his argument, which riveted the attention and won the assent of his hearers. Above all, it was his own mighty confidence in the importance of the message he brought his fellows as the prophet of the absolute goodness of God. Intensely democratic in his sympathies, his aim was to take the latest knowledge, speculation, social endeavour and political reform of his time into the pulpit, and make them comprehensible and soul-awakening to the people. "The thought which Coleridge or Emerson would have fused into an immortal epigram he struck out into applications till it shone through the common life like a heaven full of stars." Parker was in the best sense a popular preacher, and remains to this day an example to the minister, young or old, of what a prophet of religion should be. There were serious blemishes in his preaching. He was often too hasty in his generalizations, too intense and indiscriminating in both his praise and his blame. Reverend Samuel Johnson confesses of the man he knew and loved so well that he had little of the repose so needful for contemplation, and was ever "ready with the blow that laid open the heart of wrong, going about every piece of redress as if life depended upon it, and not a moment were to be lost."

In great degree this impetuosity is explained by the storm and stress of the time in which he lived. "It was his merit", said Emerson, "like Luther, Knox, Latimer, and John Baptist, to speak tart truth when there were few to say it". In a day when the wealth, social eminence, political power, intellectual culture and churchmanship of America were on the side of slavery and conservative opinion, it was well that one prominent pulpit, at least, should thunder its message of sincerity, freedom and radical reform. Parker conceived it as his first duty to arouse public sentiment and direct popular opinion by fervent appeal and trenchant argument in behalf of those great causes in church, state and society to whose promotion he dedicated his talents and gave his life. While he hoped to be an intellectual leader he cared still more to become a power for righteousness. Unjust and unmerciful he sometimes was in his criticisms of the men and measures of his time. But we must counterbalance these terrible onslaughts on those who in his opinion misled the people by the frightful attacks which were made upon him by the bigots and partisans of his day He had little patience with the esoteric method of teaching or any indirection of speech, declaring: "Alas for that man who consents to think one thing in his closet and preach another in his pulpit. God shall judge him in His mercy, not man in his wrath. But over his study and over his pulpit might be writ Emptiness: on his canonical robes, on his forehead and right hand. Deceit! Deceit!" Surely this rebuke of double-minded men who sacrifice the truth because they distrust the people is as needed in our day as in Parker's!

We may affirm . . . that Theodore Parker was the most free and fearless thinker, the most learned scholar, the most democratic and popular preacher, known to the religious life of his day. His congregations were the greatest in Protestant America in that day. How largely his discourses and books contributed to the astonishing changes of opinion which have taken place in the religious world during the past century we may not be able to discern. But the man who could religiously quicken such minds as Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Julia Ward Howe and Louisa May Alcott assuredly rendered no small service to his generation. By eloquently advocating in his pulpit and earnestly promoting in practical endeavors the great political and social reforms of his time he helped mightily to bring about that transfer of emphasis in the administration of religion which is so characteristic of the present day, and in which dogma and rite and the selfish scramble for one's individual salvation are replaced by altruistic motives, and awakened social conscience and the humanitarian spirit. But even more influential than his public utterances was the gospel of his stainless, devout, consecrated and heroic life. Much that he said and wrote may be forgotten, but what he was can never cease to be an inspiration and a help to those who would live in the spirit and serve the sacred causes of freedom, truth and humanity.....

This essay was printed in the preface to *Theism, Atheism and the Popular Theology*, by Theodore Parker, Boston, American Unitarian Association (1910).

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Dr. Arnold Crompton, Professor of Church History, at the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, is gathering materials to write a biography of the late Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur. Dr. Wilbur is considered by many to be the outstanding Unitarian Church Historian of the last century. He made several trips to Europe and to Poland to gather original documents about the early beginnings of Unitarianism on the European continent. His two volume work on the "History of Unitarianism" was published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. It would be greatly appreciated if the readers of this notice know of letters, papers or anecdotes concerning the late Earl Morse Wilbur and would be willing to send either the actual papers or notification of where they can be secured, to: Dr. Arn. Crompton, c/o Starr King School for the Ministry, 2441 Le Conte Avenue, Berkeley, California, USA.

Dr. Ernest W. Kuebler,
President of IARF

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY AND TOMORROW

*(Contents of a lecture delivered in
Frankfurt and Hannover, 1959, by Dr. H. Faber)*

A secretary of the I.A.R.F. is in a position to get a wider view of the situation in the world of liberal religion than many others. One of the things which always strikes him is the difference between the American and European scene. One of the first sentences in William Sperry's beautiful book: "Religion in America" says that there is in America a total absence of anything like an established church. The European pattern is coloured by the very fact that established churches still exist today. This means, that in Europe, the church has always been a concern of the leading classes, that it is deeply bedded in tradition, that it always has a relation to authority and that it tends to a certain conservatism. All endeavours to renew European church life meant therefore a kind of revolution and war: sectarians were by the very fact of their dissent revolutionaries. As in the XIXth century the idea of liberty swept over Europe, so it directed itself quite naturally also on the church. XIXth century Modernism did not want to found new churches but to renew the existing ones. And even if we must ascertain that the churches on the whole did not accept the modernist positions, we can say, that Modernism has had an enormous influence on the development of religious life in Europe and that the great issues which are at stake at the moment are still those which Modernists put forward. Religious renewal in Europe means renewal of the life of the churches and the foundation of free congregations outside the churches is always felt as something out of the ordinary. The attack must be directed against the fundamental strong point, to do something else means to miss the point.

If this is so, it can be understood how the development of modern civilisation can be felt as secularisation in Europe. Secularisation has already been the great problem of European church life for a long time. Church and civilisation are seen as opposites and no "orthodox" church knows how to deal effectively with the problems that its position in a secularised world puts before it.

On the American scene there is no established church. This means, that the churches there, more than in Europe, are a matter of concern for the people as such (there is also a clear division between church and state). The tradition in America is one of independent congregations, of anti-clericalism and anti-authoritarianism. One of the

important aims of American church life is to make a contribution towards the building of a good community. The congregations themselves are the centres of renewal or conservatism and people who want to start a movement of renewal open a new church. In this atmosphere the problem of secularization also gets another outlook. Church and civilisation are not seen as opposites, but as complementary to each other and even as soul and body of each other.

This all means that liberal Christianity in Europe and America are clearly different. In Europe it is primarily theological, orientated on the church as an institution, revolutionary and reformist (in the XIXth century people used to speak of a second Reformation). The social and moral implications of its influence follow this in the second instance.

In U.S.A. the liberal movement has a definite social and moral influence. The ecclesiastical and theological implications of its position come after this.

The present XXth century brings for the liberal movement in all churches and countries a complex of far-reaching problems.

First of all the radical influence of modern secularisation. Modern science, modern technics, modern philosophy and last but not least the development of modern politics (which brought about forms of political religions like national socialism and communism) gave Western civilisation the appearance of a culture in a post-christian and even post-religious era. They were openly anti- and even often anti-religious.

In U.S.A. this development hardly meant a real problem. The interrelation between church and modern civilisation is so great in America, that one can even speak of a boom of a secularised religion or of a christian civilisation. In Europe the great issue has become the digestion of the new situation by the churches. The spiritual isolation of the churches is apparent, there is a lack of ministers everywhere, organised religion is in decay and on the other hand the European civilisation suffers from religious uncertainty in its very core.

The reaction to this development set in already before the second world war. In Europe it bears the character of a return to the sources. The German struggle of the churches with its confessional front, the dialectical theology and the ecumenical movement all mean a return to the real sources of Christian church life. In this situation liberal Christianity has an uncertain position. Its history points to two sources. First of all to the churches, in which it is nurtured: the strongest movements of liberals on the continent of Europe are to be found in the former or still existing state-churches: Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland. The second source is the

humanist tradition, which inspired the Modernist movement in various aspects. At the moment, however, the problems which Modernism puts before the churches in the XIXth century are not capable of arousing any great enthusiasm. We live in a different era. This is one of the explanations of the fact, that really great liberal theologians are rare at the moment, that the liberal churches and congregations, however, are still there and often with unconquered vigour, but that their influence is far less than some fifty years ago. In U.S.A., as I said before, the problems of a secularised community led to a definite renewal of religious life. The churches are expanding over the whole continent, partly, to be sure, under the pressure of the difficulties of modern life. The liberal movement shares in this continent-wide expansion, although it exercises no longer the leading role it had half a century ago. At the back of the liberal movement there are also theological uncertainties, but on the American scene they have no decisive influence: there are humanists and theists, left wingers and right wingers, progressives and conservatives.

The most far reaching problem is in my opinion, the mobility of modern man, which U.S.A. has known for a long time, but which now makes a deep influence on European social life. It is the problem that is created by the big towns, by industrialization, by modern means of communication. Its consequences are that the traditional patterns, convictions and forms of life disappear without providing new ones. It is becoming more and more difficult to organise centres of community life. Youth, labour and intelligentsia are already more or less lost groups for the traditional churches. All European churches, the liberal ones included, face these problems: England, Scandinavia and Holland show it every Sunday.

For some decades the churches have become conscious of this situation and of the challenge, that it presents. Two things are becoming clear in the rather complicated situation. Firstly: that traditional orthodoxy is gaining a new self-assertion. New movements in the Roman Catholic church, the ecumenical movement and the dialectical theology are clear symptoms of this. It is combined with a certain endeavour to modernise the life of the churches: Germany and Holland provide some striking examples of this, but we must state that this process of modernisation does not affect the substance, the message, but more the methods used. We see coming to the foreground a number of orthodox church-people, radical, and open for the problems of today, but without any understanding of the problems which exist in the liberal movement.

Secondly: the liberal movement in this situation is no more a vanguard. Its predicament is, that it clearly sees the problems of the present situation, but that it also is sociologically frustrated: it is too much related to certain groups in modern society, and moreover it

has no clear message and principles: the diversity of opinions is great at the moment.

All this is more apparent in Europe than in U.S.A. The situation in U.S.A. is, as I said before, different in more than one aspect: the liberal movement there has also more experience with new experiments.

In this way I have tried to give a rough sketch of the present situation. I will add some words about the future. On what lines are we to work, so that we can build up a future? I cannot do more than with much modesty, say something about Europe; I do not dare to speculate about America.

I have tried to show that the liberal position represents a bridge-position between church and world, and that on both fronts it is forced into the defensive. It seems necessary to me to take the offensive on both of them.

First of all in the church: a) to fight the old and still necessary struggle against dogmatism and intolerance. b) for a new openness for the world of today and its problems, and for a responsibility for the religious crisis of this century.

Secondly in the world: a) here too a fight against dogmatism and intolerance is at work in the political religions of today. b) to make new contacts (experiments) with modern man, as is being done in the labour movement and in modern psychotherapy.

Here new experiments will be necessary and the possibility of the foundation of free congregations to meet new, and up till now unknown needs, may be necessary. It is becoming clearer every day, that the central problem of European civilisation is the problem of man and his existence in this world. Existentialism represents one of the most essential problems of the history of Western thought. It is my firm conviction, that on this very issue, the liberal movement has an important contribution to make.

That the I.A.R.F. as the international organisation of the liberal movement, is in a position to play a part in this field, seems certain. We are definitely in need of a centre of reflection, inspiration and leadership. We want people who fight our provincial outlook and keep the international aspects of our situation in mind. This is all the more true, as after the last war, the meeting of the great religions is imminent and the world again needs the liberal spirit to make this meeting possible and successful. Our Congress in Chicago has put us on a new road. May we find the people to follow this path, where we brought together representatives of the great religions.

TWO REPORTS

In Europe, Liberalism is a movement which has played an important part in the life of the churches since the Reformation, and which has made its own valuable contribution in the past.

The changed spiritual climate since the years of crisis make it imperatively necessary to re-study liberal principles in order to make them fruitful in the world of today. The circumstances under which this has to be done are not always easy, as the two following reports show.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHURCH OF GENEVA?

After the liberal Congress in May 1959, several French persons expressed their astonishment at the restricted situation of the liberals in our town. In having noticed how fervently the masses attend our services and follow our activities, our French friends have asked us, and reasonably so, for an explanation.

In 1955, the post at the Saint-Pierre-Fusterie, occupied by a liberal minister, was rescinded. When, some months later, another post became vacant at the same church, the liberal candidate was rejected through proceedings which were qualified by the "Journal de Genève" as "unsympathetic excrescences" of "very unpleasant machinations and pressures".

As no liberal minister occupied any longer any important chair in the town of Geneva, a considerable number of members of the Saint-Pierre-Fusterie made a petition. Out of this the "Association for the national protestant open church" was born, in the parish of Saint-Pierre.

It is true that in France, e.g., the ministers of liberal tendency are, already for a long time, officials of the chair of the Oratoire in

Paris. But these rules of justice and fair play have not been observed with us. There exists a contentious anti-liberalism which reigns among narrow-minded circles, the supporters of which, for the greater part, do not understand what is at stake. Thus, several of the opponents of our cause, enlightened since 1956, have discovered that they have always held the same opinions as ours. One should also take into account the indifference of the greater public with regard to ecclesiastical life, owing to modern anxiety.

Notwithstanding that, the liberal candidate had obtained at Saint-Pierre Fusterie 40% of the votes. The success of the initiative "for the open church" was immediate. The petition increased the votes by 100. The liberals of Saint-Pierre-Fusterie called the Rev. Henry Babel, doctor of theology.

Our services are held regularly and attended by great numbers, as seen by our hosts. The Association is alive, dynamic and prosperous. Every day the number of liberal members of the Saint-Pierre grows, even though the minister has never been invited to hold one of the morning services.

We quite understand that this banishment must be shocking to our French friends. The custom of honour, as observed in Paris and in the big national Churches in German Switzerland, is either ignored or despised in our Church. And this is even more paradoxal and inadmissible as the constitution of the National Church is liberal, even stipulating that the Bible should be studied "in the light of the Christian conscience and of science".

But, to be precise, the purpose of the opponents of liberalism is to change the Constitution, to upset the tradition inherited from Jean-Alphonse Turrettini, Jean-Jacques Caton Chenevière, John Cougnard, Hugues Oltramare, Albert Thomas, and Georges Fulliquet. And the aim of the liberals is to preserve the tradition!

Many Protestants have not understood what is happening, and this confusion has helped to promote deviations from Protestantism, either towards the rites and dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church or towards the exaltation of the sects.

However, today many eyes have been opened. Liberalism has seen many personalities drawn to it, and it is organised in such a way that it can face, from one moment to the other, every eventuality. In the parish of Saint-Pierre, its position is strong to such a degree that the injustice is becoming more flagrant in the eyes of the general public every day. From our point of view the success of our cause is undisputed. But we need the sympathy and the substantial support of all our friends in France, and of other nations where a Christianity on the level of the problems of our time is striven after.

*(Pierre André Pierret in "Le Protestant",
November 15th, 1959)*

A DUTCH LIBERAL IN DIFFICULTIES

On Good Friday in 1959, the central weekly of the Dutch Liberals in the Dutch Reformed Church, "Kerk en Wereld", published an article by its editor, Professor Dr. P. Smits of Leyden University. In this article, entitled "Why did Jesus die?", Professor Smits wrote that orthodox churchmen and liberals not only have different concepts about the resurrection, but also about the cross. In blunt words he rejected the orthodox view (based on St. Paul's letter to the Romans) that Jesus died for our sins. In particular, he contended that the idea that by man (Adam) sin had come into the world failed to take into account the tragic dimension in human experience felt so deeply in our time: sin is not only associated with human freedom but also with given responsibilities. The idea that God's holiness demands the death of the sinner could have meaning for modern man only if he spiritualizes this concept. Then the cross, wrote Professor Smits, could still convey the moving and profound message that the Reign of God can realise itself only through the sacrifice of the best. Christ's sacrifice is for us, as Christians, the archetype of all sacrifices.

The Dutch ecclesiastical press was not slow to react to this article, and soon it was asked whether liberals such as Professor Smits could legitimately be members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which has a Church Order in which it is said "the Church excludes all that is contrary to its confession".

On November 13, 1959, the Commission for Discipline of the Provincial Synod of Southern Holland, having been asked by several congregations to take a stand in this matter, resolved that Professor Smits was guilty of unchristian confession and, unexpectedly, applied to him the severest article of the church regulations: he was deprived of his ministerial office. Being a state-appointed professor, this did not affect his position at Leyden University.

Through this sad affair, the Dutch liberals in the Reformed Church realized that their position was in jeopardy. There remained a question of form: did the Provincial Commission of Discipline have the right in this case to impose such a measure? The answer came several months later: on appeal to a higher court, the verdict was reversed.

This leaves the fundamental question still unanswered: can what Professor Smits said be said without infringing on the Christian character of the Church? The victory over the question of form will have to be followed by a victory over the question of fundamentals: the acknowledgement that the liberal witness has a rightful place within the Dutch Reformed Church. There are signs that the theological question will be dealt with at a theological level and not at a judicial one.

J. W. Wery.

Dr. H. Faber

INTER-FAITH CONGRESS IN MANILA

In the first week of January of this year Pax Romana, the international organization of Roman Catholic students and graduates, held a symposium of representatives of the great religions of the world in Manila in the Philippines, sponsored by UNESCO. With help from UNESCO officials, the IARF received an invitation to send a representative to these meetings who could serve as one of the experts in the discussions.

After our 1958 Congress in Chicago, the theme of which was "Today's Religions can meet the World's needs Today", we thought it important that the IARF should be represented in Manila, in order to put forward the liberal point of view and to remain informed about the latest developments in this field. The necessary funds were made available with Dutch help, so I had the privilege of attending this Conference.

It is difficult to condense into a limited number of sentences the rich contents of a week's intensive discussions, and the many impressions made by my other contacts. Let me begin by expressing my gratitude for the hospitable and liberal way in which the Pax Romana officials organized my participation in the conference. I had ample opportunity to express my feelings and to learn from other participants. The theme of the discussions was: "The Impact of the Great Religions on the Life of the People in East and West". The accent of the meetings, therefore, was not on an exchange of theological viewpoints, but on a common endeavour to analyze in which way modern civilization affects the life of the people in East and West and how the great religions react to this influence.

The impression which is foremost in my mind is that we are only at the very beginning of a real meeting of the great religions. We have lived so much apart due to distances in space and also in spirit, not to mention distances caused by political resentment and ignorant pride, that the growing world unity finds us at the moment quite

unprepared for a thorough exchange of thought. It is also true that many people try to find in their religion a last-resort escape from confrontation with another point of view, instead of realizing that all great religions possess in their centre an openness for the other, a love of the other, and a belief in divine guidance. My strong feeling is that religion, instead of being a hindrance to unity, can and must be a bridge.

My second impression is that in the present situation the people of East and West—and with them, their religions—are facing the same problems, namely, the problems of a civilization which is rapidly spreading over the globe and proving to be more and more a revolutionary force in the life-patterns of all countries and consequently in their religious beliefs and customs as well. We are all seeking a solution to the question: what in our religion is essential and what is temporal? In nearly every session in Manila, the discussion turned to this point.

My third impression is that it is unwise to start with the assumption that, in essence, all religions are the same. In discussions like these, the differences between the religions become so manifest that it seems much more rational to begin with the assumption that the differences are greater than the similarities. But even this is too simple. Every religion is a living whole and possesses its own history. We meet each other in this century in a special phase of the development of each of us. As a result of this meeting, what seems essential to me is that we be prepared to see in every religion a divine work, so that discussions such as these can be an experiment in which everyone concerned is willing to give and to accept a contribution to and from the other participants. But very important problems immediately become apparent. The religions of the "East" are essentially inclusive and those of the "West" are in principle exclusive. The problem which this presents is one of the first which should be thoroughly analyzed and discussed.

This visit to Manila gave me an opportunity to do two things which we had been hoping to do for a long time but had never been able: a visit to the Brahmo Samaj, our member group in India, and a visit to the liberal groups of the old "Aglipayan" movement in the Philippines. I was able to make close contact with both groups, and I want to express my sincere thanks to all those in India and in the Philippine Islands who gave me such a cordial reception and enabled me to gain an insight into the situation in both India and the Philippines.

I am deeply impressed by the way in which the leaders in India are trying to solve the immense problems of their country, and by the contribution of the Brahmo Samaj in the past and the present toward solutions. What India is doing, e.g. in the field of education,

is highly important, and I perceived its influence everywhere, even when its name was not mentioned. One of the great traditions of the liberal movement has been alive in India for many decades, and it is a pity that so often people in the West are insufficiently aware of development in this great country. We meet there also one of the vexing problems of the liberal movement everywhere: that although intentions remain the same, the spirit of the present era is not always favorable to the right development of our work. Many in India expressed the feeling that one of the enduring tasks of the liberal movement is to remain a leaven, a centre of inspiration and direction.

On the Philippine Islands the situation was different but still very complicated. In the difficult years after the death of the great and beloved leader Gregorio Aglipay, who in the beginning of this century left the Roman Catholic Church with more than a million followers, the Independent Church was faced with the problem of how to provide leadership. The majority of the priests, under the leadership of Isabelo de los Reyes whom I met in Copenhagen in 1934, and whom I visited again this week, were afraid that the roots for a truly liberal church were not available, and sought support for their old "catholic" tradition in the Episcopal Church, which was prepared to help them with the education of their priests, etc. One should know the situation in the Philippines better in order to pass judgment, but it seems certain to me that the problem which Aglipay saw and tried to solve is not brought nearer to solution in this way.

There is a smaller group, originally led by Bishop Fonacier and now under the direction of Bishop Ramos, which tries to remain loyal to the principles of the old Aglipayan movement. Its strength, however, has been weakened because they have for years been involved in a struggle over church properties, and as a result the problems of the liberal gospel do not get sufficient attention. Besides this group there are a small number of priests under the leadership of a young bishop, Angelo Bitanga, who call themselves Unitarians and have their own church under this name.

My general impression is that the great problem of all the groups mentioned is the education of priests, in other words, the building up of better leadership. If one sees how much money the Roman Catholic Church spends on schools in the East, one finds it difficult to understand how the liberal movement, with its great academic tradition, is suffering from lack of spiritual nourishment in this part of the world.

JAPAN

A NEW RELIGION: KONKO-KYO

At the Congress in Chicago in 1958, the IARF was glad to meet a Japanese visitor, who attended the congress as a representative of a new religion in Japan: the "KONKO-KYO". His name was Rev. Hirotoshi Sato and he was a friend of Dr. Hideo Kishimoto, President of the Japan Free Religious Association, which is a member-group of the IARF. — Because the Konko-Kyo was unknown to the IARF until then we asked Dr. Sato to inform us more fully about it. He handed us a booklet edited by the Headquarters of Konko-Kyo from which we cite:

"Konko-Kyo" (Konko religion) is a new faith which emerged in the middle of the 19th century, during the tumultuous years around the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Its founder was a common farmer who had received no special education nor had he had any religious training. Through his earnest quest for a benevolent God, and through his meekness and piety, he was brought into communion with Him. The Konko religion therefore is in no way related doctrinally or otherwise to any other religious faith, having its own teachings based on the unique religious experience of its Founder. It is misleading to regard the Konko religion as a sect of Shintoism, as conventionally classified by the Government. It is the will of the Founder that all men should share with him the blessed joy of being saved by God and of serving Him." (1)

From a letter of Dr Sato dated Nov. 5, 1959, to the Secretariat of IARF we quote the following:

"To us Konko-Kyo believers, this year has a special significance, because it is the 100th anniversary of the founding of Konko-Kyo. We are holding a big festival to celebrate our centenary, starting October 1st and lasting until November 15th. Approximately 150 000 believers are coming, during this festival season, not only from all over Japan, but even from America (most of them coming

from Hawaii and the region of the Pacific coast of America) to attend the celebrations here at our General Headquarters Service Hall in Japan.

We are hoping to make this celebration a new starting point. We are determined to make further efforts to realize the teachings of our Founder in the daily lives of his followers. The fundamental idea of our religion is that God and man can both only exist through mutual dependence and cooperation. In our future efforts we must emphasize among other things, the improvement of human relations. This is we believe the hardest to achieve, but at the same time the most important of all problems. Since home life is the foundation of all kinds of life, whether social or individual, we must also try to establish happy homes.

As we all realize, the world has become smaller and our individual and family life cannot help being influenced by what is happening outside our own country. Keeping this in mind we ask ourselves: what should we do in order that not only we ourselves, but all mankind be happy and reach salvation? The answer is very difficult and probably varies according to the nature of one's faith. But of course we have our answer and it is to practice God's teaching in every phase of our daily lives. On this point we must reflect, asking ourselves daily whether we have done our best. By means of self-reflection and prayer we must seek salvation. In this connection I must mention our "Movement for the Realization of "Toritsugi" (or Mediation) and Advancement of Faith" which was started just ten years ago. And this year, commemorating our centenary, we have launched into another ten-year program of this movement. We believe that faith is not something apart from daily work and life. On the contrary, daily work is where faith starts, functions and strengthens. Based on this belief we try to dedicate ourselves to a religious way of life in which every act from the moment we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed in the evening, must be in line with the Konko-Kyo teachings. We believe our whole life should be religious. This belief motivates the Movement.

The points which are stressed most in this "24 hours" religious life-program" are mentioned in the following motto:

In every aspect of daily life
and on the basis of the understanding of the Founder's teaching:

(1) Always make the Founder's teaching the guiding principle,
and, realizing the nature of the problem,
seek the "toritsugi" (or mediation)
In a mutually helping, cooperating spirit
and with the due procedure of the "toritsugi";

- (2) get the "toritsugi",
So that the blessings come to you and enable you to solve
problems of every kind, especially that of human relations;
(3) Train in the faith at all times.

The Konko-Kyo organization does not engage in any political activities. We don't support or favour any particular political party in Japan. But we do seek peace and oppose war. We join Dr Schweitzer and other peace-loving people, no matter where they live, in opposing the use and testing of atomic or hydrogen bombs. We do our share in promoting world peace. We believe we can contribute to the welfare of all mankind by living the truly religious life each day in our respective field of work.

Another idea that will help you understand Konko-Kyo is: "People do not serve religion, but religion serves people." This idea underlies all Konko-Kyo's beliefs since the Founder started our religion a hundred years ago.

Present world religions have various problems in common. They have to meet the needs of the people and, I believe, find and share the common purpose. In order to do so there must be inter-religious talks, such as those we had in Chicago in 1958, as often as we can. And I hope the organization of the IARF will be strengthened all over the world and develop vigorously.

(1) To give an impression of religious diversity in Japan, here are some statistics on religious communities and their membership as published by the Ministry of Education. The totals, excluding the overseas membership, exceed the whole population of Japan because there are many people who belong to a Shinto shrine and a Buddhist Temple at the same time. In these statistics the Konko religion is considered as a part of Shintoism.

In July 1958 there were 1 628 Konko churches, (including those in Hawaii and America) with a total membership of 644 728 believers and 3706 ministers.

Shintoism			Buddhism			Christianity			Others		
Shrines	Priests	Membership Unit: 1,000	Temples	Priests	Membership Unit: 1,000	Churches	Clergy	Membership Unit: 1,000	Shrines & Temples	Priests	
100,700	176,155	34,470	75,089	119,209	42,312	2,367	9,035	447	447	8,813	3
99,523	186,326	78,962	76,559	127,705	44,063	2,374	12,243	601	584	12,247	3

THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION

the house of quiet vicissitude

A world without a contingency or an agony could have no hero and no saint, and enable no Son of Man to discover that he was a Son of God. But for the suspended plot, that is folded in every life, history is a dead chronicle of what was known before as well as after; art sinks into the photograph of a moment, that hints at nothing else; and poetry breaks the cords and throws the lyre away. There is no Epic of the certainties; and no lyric without the surprise of sorrow and the sigh of fear. Whatever touches and ennobles us in the lives and in the voices of the past is a divine birth from human doubt and pain. Let then the shadows lie, and the perspective of the light still deepen beyond our view; else, while we walk together, our hearts will never burn within us as we go, and the darkness as it falls, will deliver us into no hand that is Divine.

James Martineau
Hours of Thought

souls

The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is a "vale of tears". Call the world, if you please, The Vale of Soulmaking. Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it soul, a place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways. As various as the lives of men are, so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, of the sparks of his own essence.

John Keats

prayer

Merciful God, be thou now unto us a strong tower of defence. Give us grace to await thy leisure, and patiently to bear what thou doest unto us, nothing doubting thy goodness towards us. Therefore do with us in all things as thou wilt: Only arm us, we beseech thee. with thy armour, that we may stand fast; above all things taking to us the shield of faith, praying always that we may refer ourselves wholly to thy will, being assuredly persuaded that all thou doest cannot but be well. And unto thee be all honour and glory.

Lady Jane Grey, 1553

Beheaded on Tower Hill in 1554, at the age of sixteen

(from: "The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian", March 1960)

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Executive meeting in Paris

The members of the Executive Committee of the IARF will meet in Paris from July 27 until July 31st. Included on the agenda will be a survey of the possibilities of interfaith contacts in various countries, and ways to stimulate them; preparations for the congress in Davos (Switzerland) in 1961 will also be discussed. The Executive will be presided over by its president, Dr E. W. Kuebler.

The Executive will be guests of the Paris Liberals, who will organize a „soirée théologique”, with representatives of different religions as speakers.

On Sunday morning the Executive Committee will attend divine service at “l'Oratoire”, the famous Paris church.

Preliminary Program Congress 1961, Davos, Switzerland

August 8th—13th, 1961

Theme: The Unity of Mankind in Eastern and Western View

Tuesdayevening

- Opening of the Congress. Welcome by the Lord Mayor of Davos and by the Rev. Dr. Peter Dalbert, president of Swiss local Congress Committee. Introduction to the Congress by Dr. Ernest W. Kuebler, president of IARF.

Wednesday

- “The Liberal Approach to World Community”
- Discussion groups, on: The Problems of the Unity of Mankind
- Cultural activities

Thursday

- Two speakers on: “How does the East see the West?”
- Discussion groups (as above)
- Cultural activities

Friday

- Two speakers on: “How the West sees the East” (Nationalism, Race Relations, Communism)
- Discussion groups (as above)
- Cultural activities

Saturday

- “Ethical and Political Implications of ‘The Beloved Community’ (Good Community—One World—Kingdom of God)
- Discussion groups (as above)
- Delegates on: “How Religious Liberals operate in their Respective Communities”
- Cultural activities

Sunday

- Religious Service
- Congress dinner
- Closing session with impressions of some delegates and the new President's address: "The Challenge of the Future".

N.B. The afternoons will be used for: Meetings of special groups (Women's Alliance or professional groups), General Assembly, excursion and for meetings of the Executive Committee. Probably tours will be arranged for foreign visitors before and after the Congress.

Exhibition on art and worship
at the IARF Congress 1961 in Switzerland

At the Chicago Congress in 1958 it was proposed to collect emblems, pictures and diagrams of architectural forms and worship material, to be exposed at the IARF Congress in Switzerland, which will be held in August 1961.

By means of such an exhibition, we can inform one another of the ways in which our own Church or Congregation tries to meet the modern world and its needs in forms of worship, rites and symbols. Especially interesting would be the investigation into the degree to which we are bound by tradition (willing and unwilling) and in what degree we feel free and able to express our faith and spiritual life in new forms and words.

We would suggest the following items:

1. Pictures and diagrams of church buildings (interior and exterior)
2. Emblems and adages used by church and congregation
3. Liturgy for Sunday service
4. Confessions and liturgical texts for baptism and communion service
5. Material used for propaganda (if possible illustrated)

It may be profitable to send more than one copy of each, e.g. of the emblems, liturgies, and the material for propaganda, so that they can be distributed among the membergroups.

The Secretariat in The Hague is ready to receive all material which may be of use for such an exhibition. We kindly request the Secretaries of the membergroups of the IARF to send all this before 1st October next. It will depend on the quantity (and of course on the quality) as to how much of their contributions can be used for the congress exhibition.

FROM THE MEMBERGROUPS

NETHERLANDS

The Remonstrant Brotherhood will be hosts at the Arminius Symposium in Amsterdam, August 4th to 6th.

Four hundred years ago, on October 10th, 1560, Arminius was born. His theology of free grace has had widespread influence all over the world.

In the invitation we read:

"For the first time in Church history, we are trying to bring together the main representatives of Arminianism, however different the theological conclusions may be which they have derived from the teachings of Arminius. It will be interesting to trace back to their origin the paths we have travelled, and to see whether we can understand each other more deeply on the basis of the principles of Arminius and so strengthen our ecumenical ties."

Speakers will be:

Dr. G. J. Hoenderdaal, professor of Arminian theology at Leyden University, on "The life and struggle of Arminius in the Dutch Republic";

Dr. Geoffry F. Nuttall, Congregationalist, on "The influence of Arminius in Britain";

Dr. Gerald O. McCulloh, Methodist, on "The influence of Arminius in America";

Prof. Dr. L. J. van Holk, Remonstrant, on "From Arminius to Arminianism in Dutch Theology";

Prof. James L. Adams, Unitarian, on "The Social Issues of Arminianism".

NORWAY

Religious situation in Norway

A series of broadcastings on "What do we expect from the Church" has attracted much interest in Norway. The eleven talks were answered by three Bishops. The series was inspired by a similar

initiative last year for the German radio. Probably the addresses will be printed together with the answers.

In the congregations there is a tendency to come to a closer cooperation between groups with different theological outlooks.

Four of the nine bishops-seats are vacant at present and it is hoped that two or three of them will be filled by bishops with more or less liberal convictions.

Mr. O. F. Olden, a well-known friend of our International Association, has published six long articles on religious subjects in the Stavanger daily press and he intends to write more in the future.

Articles in the daily press on religious topics are not infrequent, and a more critical attitude towards orthodoxy is more and more noticeable.

U.S.A.

A committee of eleven Unitarians and Universalists in the U.S.A. has been named to promote American attendance at the Davos-congress. Names of the committee members were presented by Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, president of the American Unitarian Association, to the A.U.A. Board of Directors at its February meeting. The committee includes: the Rev. Arthur Tripp, chairman; Mrs. William W. Davies; Dr. Richard D. Pierce; the Rev. John Cummins; the Rev. Christopher Raible; Dr. Robert Tapp; Mrs. Auriel Havron; Dr. Ernest Cassara; the Rev. Edward A. Cahill; Dr. Ernest W. Kuebler; the Rev. Dana Klotzle.

BOOKNEWS

Basil Viney, Immortality and you, The Lindsey Press

A small booklet with fine thoughts on this sincere subject. It brings eternity to the life of to-day, and the final words are: "Yet, after all, it is best and wisest to live one life at a time; even one day at a time. It is more grateful to God to trust in him for the future, and serve and enjoy him *now*."

From Professor Stanislaw Kot, the famous Polish historian we received his article: "*Opposition to the Pope by the Polish Bishops, 1557-1560*" and his "*La Reforme dans le Grand-Duché de Lithuanie*".

As always this is high-class historical work.

Fritz Buri's "*Theologie der Existenz* (Paul Haupt, Bern) is one of Buri's typical works in which he tries to explain the Christian message with the help of existentialism.

Werner Kaegi: *"Humanismus der Gegenwart"*, Artemis Verlag Zürich

Among the humanist scholars in the old meaning of the word Werner Kaegi holds an important place. In his works we always feel the vivid spirit of Erasmus. This booklet is an oration for the Association of Swiss high school teachers.

Clarence R. Skinner: *"Hells Ramparts fell"*. Universalist Publ. House, Boston

Among the pioneers of Universalism in America John Murray plays an important role. This book tells the story of his life and gives new facts about the history of Universalism.

Karl Friedrich Werner: *"Brevier einer Philosophie des Möglichen"*. (*Breviary of a philosophy of the possible*) Part I, Philosophieren. Selbstverlag

A sketch complecting in a nutshell many philosophical systems from which the author tries to lead us to a basis for a philosophy for modern men.

Bruce Findlow: *"Kharang"*, with an introduction by Margaret Barr, The Lindsey Press

This eye-witness account of the work of Margaret Barr in the villages of the Khasi Hills in Assam gives a good picture of her important work. Everyone interested in Unitarianism and modern "mission" must read this booklet.

Karl Reinert: *"Die Reformation der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Kirche"*, C. Bertelsmann Verlag, Gütersloh

A contribution to the church-history of Transylvania, that old European centre of Protestantism.

"Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben". A *"Festschrift"* to Albert Schweitzer on his 80th birthday. Paul Haupt, Bern

Many friends of Schweitzer have on this occasion made a contribution from the various fields in which Schweitzer in such an admirable way plays his important role. A monumental piece of work!

Feschotte, J.: *"Albert Schweitzer, an introduction"*. Translated from the French. With two addresses by A. Schweitzer. Boston, Beacon Press, 1955. 130 pp. \$ 2.—

A close friend of Schweitzer contributes with this booklet to the literature on the great liberal thinker and worker, with a brief but adequate account of the Doctor's life and work, presenting the special flavour of his Alsatian birthplace. Two recent writings of Schweitzer have been included, one an account of an episode in his childhood, the other his important address on the problem of ethics

in the evolution of human thought, delivered on his installation as a member of the French Academy in 1952.

Skinner, C. R.: *Worship and a well ordered life*. Boston, The Universalist Historical Society, 1955. 183 pp.

Three unpublished posthumous manuscripts by the late Dean of Tufts College School of Religion. Although these three articles: "The Church as a Universal Community", "Worship", and "A Well Ordered Life" seem to be separate works, they are related in this respect, that they treat several aspects of one problem, the nature and function of liberal religion. A fine contribution to a better understanding of Universalism.

Edgell, D. P., *William Ellery Channing: Apostle of the free mind*. Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955. 264 pp. \$ 4.—

Mr. Edgell, in his fascinating biography of one of the most important intellectual leaders of the 19th century in New England, tries to re-introduce Channing as a man of this time and to determine the nature of his thought and its relevance to the problems of his age and ours. As new material and sources are used this book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Pre-Civil-War period.

Kötscher-Bark, L.: *Jesus undogmatisch (Jesus undogmatic)*. Bern, Paul Haupt, 1958. 95 pp. FR/DM 6.80

The authoress gives a clear, historically founded picture of the life of Jesus and his surroundings, from a liberal point of view. The value of this booklet lies in the fact that both theologians and laymen will find much material for thought, and especially people, who lost their belief in dogmas, will find in it a new approach to Christianity.

Received for the library:

Kularatne, D. G. De S.: "Lovingkindness - "Metta". A meditation subject. Published in Ceylon. 14 pp.

Lamont, C.: *A Humanist's answer to the philosophic needs of today*. Published by The American Humanist Association, 1957. 16 pp.

Sierksma, F.: *De religieuze projectie*. 2nd impression. Delft, W. Gaade. 1957. 202 pp.

PERSONAL MEMBERS, ATTENTION PLEASE!

Personal Members who have not yet paid their membership fee for 1960 are kindly requested to send their contribution at their earliest convenience to the Personal Membership Secretary of IARF in their own country or to the Membergroup concerned.

Visitors to Holland, wanting information about and contact with the Dutch liberal movement are cordially invited to inquire at the IARF Secretariat, 40 Laan Copes van Cattenburch, The Hague, Telephone no. 638860.